

# PRESS DEPARTMENT OF STATE

November 11, 1974

No. 494



REMARKS OF  
THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
AT THE SEVENTH ANNUAL AWARDS PRESENTATION  
OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION  
NOVEMBER 11, 1974



SECRETARY KISSINGER: Tom, distinguished guests, I appreciate this introduction. I think you were somewhat too modest. There are many junior Foreign Service Officers who have managed to discomfit me. (Laughter) I, of course, realize that I am working under a certain handicap in this building, the primary one being that the majority of the Foreign Service Officers are convinced that I could never be working in this building unless I were in my present position. (Laughter) And, therefore, they try to spare me the operational details of my job. They let me make decisions about the plans for the Year 2000 and the plumbing in the basement, but there is a grey area in between which I seem to have trouble reaching.

I have been here for a year now, and I'm beginning to understand the system. For example, a few months ago I was supposed to call a certain Senator on a subject of not overwhelming difficulty, which was embodied in a memorandum having eight endorsements. But lest I miss the point -- which was thought highly probable (Laughter) -- some of the drafters

**For further information contact:**

of this memorandum called the Senator and told him what I was going to say. (Laughter) And it's a system that works extraordinarily well; it's a form of psychological warfare.

The other day there was a Senator that I was supposed to call who had already received four phone calls during the day from junior Foreign Service Officers about what I was going to say to him, and told to stand by for my phone call, which never came. I met him at dinner that evening, and he was willing to concede anything if I had only known what it was that I was supposed to say to him.

(Laughter)

The memorandum caught up with me the next morning. I expressed my views on that subject to my dedicated associates, and now I don't get memoranda any more that show the number of endorsements. (Laughter) I dare not hope that the number of endorsements has actually declined, but I am in blissful ignorance about it.

I wanted to make a few remarks about the conduct of foreign policy as I see it at this moment and the role of the Foreign Service in relation to it. We've read a great deal about institutionalizing foreign policy, which, as I understand it, means that whenever I do something that somebody doesn't like it is obvious that I haven't



institutionalized foreign policy.

But I thought I might talk to you about what the necessities are as I see them and what I think the contribution is that the Foreign Service can make.

We are going through one of the greatest changes in the position of the United States in the world that has ever occurred in our history. When we conducted foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II during a period of extraordinary creativity, we subconsciously drew on our domestic experience. What we did internationally was really to implement the New Deal experience of at home. We believed that stability would result more or less automatically from closing the gap between expectations and reality. We were working with democratic governments of similar traditions, and we were carrying out values which had been built into our society so much that they came to be taken for granted.

I believe that the decade after World War II was, without doubt, one of the most creative in American foreign policy. But it is also clear that in the 1970's we are living in a much more complicated period. The old assumptions of implacable hostility by a unified, monolithic communist bloc threatening the so-called free peoples has disappeared. The self-assurance with which we thought we could reform the

governments of all the peoples of the world has also been shaken, for a variety of reasons, including a very searing domestic experience. The problem of security which was hidden by the fact of the atomic monopoly has appeared to the United States for the first time in its history in the manner in which other less favored nations had to deal with it throughout most of their experience. And so we face the tension between the requirements of security and the imperative of our values, between the evolution of societies of different values and the necessity that they will not be accepted unless they are based on some principle of justice that people can share.

---

We have to build this new structure in such a way that the act of construction doesn't make everything tumble down. I do not now want to go into a long analysis of the nature of our foreign policy. I make this point about the revolutionary change in the nature of our foreign policy to indicate the responsibilities that I believe the Foreign Service must carry over the years ahead.

During my first years in Washington there was a great deal of debate about the relative influence of the White House as against the State Department. And it is a

debate that is not new. But it is a debate that really should never take place because I believe that if this building does its job any President must want to use it. And, therefore, the question is, what is the job this building is supposed to do? What is it that is required in the present period?

First, let me say that, having worked with the Foreign Service for a year, there is no doubt in my mind that there is no group more dedicated, more able, and more knowledgeable in any department in the Government. On the contrary, I don't know any department in the Government that has as dedicated and able a group of people. But the demands on the Foreign Service have changed.

In earlier periods in which the framework was more settled, a great emphasis could be put on reporting and the accurate rendition of conversations that are held by various Officers in the field. Today -- at least as far as I am concerned -- reporting is, of course, important, but what we need more than anything is analysis. The description of a conversation with somebody that the senior people have never heard of is almost totally irrelevant or extremely confusing.



Now, in those parts of the world in which I know the chief actors it is quite sufficient. But you cannot count on the fact that there will be a Secretary of State or a President who knows the chief actors. And, therefore, if you want to help the Seventh Floor, it is absolutely imperative not just to report what people say but to explain what people mean, not just to describe how a situation looks but to try to lay out what the trends are, what can be expected, and to do so not on the basis of some sentimental proclivities but on the basis of a hard-headed -- if necessary, cold-blooded -- analysis of what the various alternatives are that the situation requires.

Now, I must say candidly that in this respect we are not doing as well as we can, not nearly as well as our capabilities would permit us to. And when I speak of institutionalization of foreign policy, what I would like to see, leave behind, is that when a problem reaches this Department automatically the various bureaus take hold of it in a manner that shapes it in relation to foreseeable purposes of real alternatives and predictable consequences.

I have been a veteran of the options process. And I have tended to insist on being given choices in which

lately the Department has developed a higher degree of skill than before. For the first four years of my presence in Washington, if I picked Option 2 I was right 98 percent of the time, because there was Option 2, which was the preferred option; there was Option 1, which was Option 2 minus a little bit; and then there was Option 3, which was Option 2 plus a little bit. But I attended a meeting this morning where the preferred option was always Option 3, so now I'm in a state of extreme confusion, and you mustn't do this to me. (Laughter)

But when we speak about options, what I have in mind is some real options, and not a party line developed in the bureau after which all the considerable ingenuity of the Service is put to work to make that view prevail. I think if the view is correct it can survive being put in the form of alternatives. And I think if some people are willing to play the role of Devil's advocate the preferred view will gain in strength.

I think this is all the more essential because, as we go ahead into the future, we will face more and more confusing situations and there will be an overwhelming temptation to let one's self be driven by the emotion of the moment. But the difference between observers and actors



is that the actors who are responsible for the conduct of foreign policy do not have the right to let themselves be driven by emotions. They are responsible not only for the best thing that can happen but also for the consequences of failure. They are not conducting foreign policy in order to implement their personal preference, but to carry out the national interest in relation to the global interest. And they have to keep in mind that it isn't self-gratification that brought them into the Foreign Service but precisely the notion of service.

Now, I believe that all over the world there are many -- there are hundreds -- who live by these principles. And I believe that without the Foreign Service we will not be able to create a consistent foreign policy. We cannot base foreign policy on star performers. We cannot rely that somebody will come along every few years to manipulate events. What we need is a high average standard of performance that is carried over through the decades. And that cannot be done by any President or by any Secretary of State. That is what I mean by institutionalization of foreign policy.

I don't mean that every country director attends every meeting in the Secretary's office. But I do mean that



the country directors and the assistant secretaries have a sense of where they think the nation ought to go, that they can defend that sense, that if they have a different view from the Seventh Floor or from the White House that they possess the intellectual discipline to present it and to put up a tough fight before they yield if another decision is made. I believe we have the makings of it in this Department, and if I can leave this behind I would consider it a much more significant achievement than the negotiations that come and go, and every success of which just creates a new set of problems.

This is why I am delighted that Tom has asked me to be here at the Awards Ceremony, some of which, as I understand it, are being given for dissenting from established points of view, for which we bear no visible grudges.

(Laughter) But you will notice that I'm not reading the citations. (Laughter) But I think it is right that awards are given for dissent. I think that a self-confident Service must be a Service in which dissent is encouraged. It should be dissent that is kept within the Service, and once a decision is made it is carried out with a discipline which is, I believe, characteristic of the Service.



But I have enjoyed working with Tom. I have enjoyed working with the Foreign Service Officers. And I think they are getting used to my administrative practice in which the highest attainable praise is the absence of criticism. (Laughter)

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

\* \* \* \* \*